

Depositing records at WSHC: transfer guidance

Wiltshire & Swindon Archives are always looking for new ways to expand and diversify our collections. The main way we add to our collections is by accepting donations and deposits from local organisations and people. This document will guide anyone who wishes to donate or deposit items to the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre for safekeeping.

Why we collect archives

Archives are the written memory of individuals and communities. They capture the lives and stories of those who came before us, long after their memory has faded. They tell the stories of the people, places and organisations that make up our shared history. They provide transparency about institutional decisions that affect us all, and can provide restitution to victims of injustice.

The Wiltshire and Swindon Archives' mission is to capture the written and pictorial heritage of Wiltshire and Swindon that reflects its diverse communities, economy and landscape, and to make these records accessible to the people and communities that make up our county.

As a local authority archive, we also have a statutory duty to make the historic records of Wiltshire Council available to the public, to support the Council's obligations under the Public Records Act and the Freedom of Information Act. We are also responsible for providing statutory access to other records covered by information legislation, including parochial and manorial records.

What we collect

We collect archives and published works from Wiltshire-based individuals, families, institutions, businesses, estates, clubs, churches and religious groups of all denominations. We are interested in documents that reflect the history of our county regardless of their format, but some examples of the types of records that we collect are:

- Minutes
- Accounts
- Reports
- Maps, plans and drawings
- Correspondence
- Diaries and journals
- Photographs, negatives and postcards
- Digital records (in any file format)
- Audio-visual records (we may transfer these to a specialist archive if we do not have the equipment to play them or the specialist storage conditions to preserve them)

- Published research
- Books
- Pamphlets
- Newspapers
- Newsletters and magazines

If the type of material you wish to deposit is not listed above please get in touch with us at Archives@wiltshire.gov.uk to discuss the deposit as we may still want to add it to the county archive.

Wiltshire & Swindon Archives is not a records management service and therefore please only transfer documents that are no longer in current use.

What we do not collect

If you are depositing records from a Parish Council, Parochial Church Council, community organisation, school or a business, please see the detailed retention and transfer guidance for your organisation in addition to the more general advice below.

- [Parish and Town Councils](#)
- [Church of England parishes](#)
- [Charity, community and art organisations](#)
- [Businesses](#)
- [Personal and private papers](#)
- [Schools](#)
- Methodist Church records – please see the [retention guidelines](#) published by The Methodist Church

Wiltshire & Swindon Archives has a collecting policy and an acquisition and disposal policy. Material that we take in must fit with these policies and must represent Wiltshire or Swindon. Because space is at a premium in our climate-controlled strongrooms we do not accept material that does not fit our collecting policy or that has limited historical or informational value.

We do not generally accept the following classes of record:

- Items with no significant link to Wiltshire or Swindon
- Three-dimensional objects, including works of art, trophies, plaques, banners, quilts, tablecloths etc
- Multiple copies of the same record (including draft versions, unless no final copy survives)
- Copies of records that are available online or in another publicly available collection (original items of material available online will be accepted)
- Financial records which are less than seven years old (these are legally required to be retained by the depositing organisation)

- Receipts, bank statements, chequebook stubs, invoices, VAT records, paying-in books or other ephemeral financial records beyond final accounts
- Insurance records
- Risk assessments
- Tender documents or other quotations for work
- Circulars from regional or national bodies
- Staff files of an ephemeral nature, including timesheets or personnel records (not including staff lists or employee registers, which should be deposited with WSA)
- Research notes

Please ensure that any records from the classes in this list are removed from the collection prior to transfer. We reserve the right to charge for the disposal of any material from this list which is transferred to WSA without prior agreement.

The transfer process

There are several things to consider and actions to take before you transfer records to the archives.

What type of transfer do you want to make?

Wiltshire & Swindon Archives accept new material by donation (giving us the material) or long-term deposit. Long-term deposits are still legally owned by the depositor but the storage at the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre is regarded as indefinite. Occasionally a depositor may want the material to be owned by them until their death when ownership transfers to the Wiltshire & Swindon Archives. If this is the case, please ensure this is in writing as part of your will.

When you bring the material in an archivist will discuss the most appropriate type of deposit with you and will agree the best option with you. In general, we work to the following guidelines:

Donation: any material from a person or estate; material left in a will or found in a house clearance; any material from closed organisations or groups

Long-term deposit: material from public body organisations such as councils, hospitals, and schools; churches (Church of England and non-conformist); local groups such as Women's Institutes, Rotary Clubs, and sports clubs; independent schools and hospitals. As a rule, if the organisation is still going, deposits are encouraged as it is likely you will be depositing more records in the future.

Wiltshire & Swindon Archives encourages donation of material where possible and where applicable, but we are happy to discuss any requirements.

Bequest: You may wish to ensure your collection is passed to us as a bequest after your death, but that you keep it until that time. If this is something you would like to consider, please get in touch with us so we can discuss the process and ensure we are the most suitable repository for

those items. We can provide you with some wording to be included in your will if this would be helpful for you.

Make an appointment

We ask all potential depositors to make an appointment prior to bringing in any material. Please email us at archives@wiltshire.gov.uk to arrange an appointment. Our opening days are Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Please see our [How to find us](#) page for directions. Our address is Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, Cocklebury Road, Chippenham, SN15 3QN.

When we arrange your appointment, we will ask you how much material there is to bring in, as it is useful for us to have an idea of how much to expect. We will also try and get an idea of what is being deposited or donated. If there is a lot, it may be that we allow more time to process your material before any other scheduled appointments.

If there is a sizeable amount of material, or if we think it might be a good idea to appraise it prior to it being brought in, we may offer to come to you to have a better look at the items. We can also come to you to collect material if you find it difficult to get to us.

Preparing your collection for transfer

Due to limitations on storage space and staff time it is very helpful for our archivists if you carry out some preparatory work on the records prior to their transfer to Wiltshire and Swindon Archives:

- Please sort through the material you plan to transfer to remove any records that we do not collect (see [above](#))
- Make a list of the contents of each box that you plan to bring in
- For digital records, please make a list of the files included in your transfer. If a file or folder name does not reflect the contents, please give a very brief description of what is in the file/folder.
- Please remove documents from plastic wallets (these can be damaging to archives over the long term, and are time-consuming for staff to remove)
- We do not keep archives in ring binders or lever-arch files, so if you would like to re-use your binders please remove the records from them prior to deposit.

Is there a charge for transferring material to the archives?

There is generally no charge for transferring records to Wiltshire and Swindon Archives. However, if you are depositing a particularly large collection then we may ask you or your organisation to contribute some funds towards the storage, packaging and cataloguing of the material.

After the transfer

What happens to the material I bring in?

Items that fit our collecting and acquisitions policies will be processed formally by one of our archivists. This includes ensuring the material is not mould damaged or otherwise inaccessible, putting it into boxes and recording what is there. This process is called accessioning, and depending on the size and nature of the material it can take several weeks. We will send you a receipt for the accession once we have processed it. Receipts will be sent by email unless otherwise agreed. Receipts include deposit agreements so please sign and return your copy to us for our records.

Where possible, the material will then be catalogued. This means that items from your deposit will be given a unique number and made available in our online catalogue. In your appointment, we will discuss potential closures of documents, applicable particularly if there is confidential or sensitive information within them. If closures have been agreed, these will be made clear on the catalogue.

Unwanted items

As part of the accessioning and cataloguing process, our archivists will appraise the material you bring in to select items for permanent preservation. When you transfer the material to us, the form you fill out will allow you to specify what you would like done with anything we decide not to keep. We can:

- Dispose of unwanted items responsibly as confidential waste
- Return unwanted items to you
 - We will contact you to let you know how much there is and what it is. We will retain these items for one month after notifying you that they are ready to collect. If they are not collected within that time they will be disposed of confidentially, and we reserve the right to charge for this disposal.
 - If any items in the deposit are legally required to be retained by the depositor (for example financial records that are less than seven years old), you will be asked to collect them within one calendar month. As these items cannot be destroyed, we will charge for their continued storage after one calendar month.
- Transfer unwanted items to another service
 - This is relevant to items that may be more suitable held elsewhere. Usually this applies to out of county material but could sometimes apply to material that would be better suited in a specialist archive, library or museum.

Access to the archives

Who will see the documents I transfer?

Wiltshire & Swindon Archives is open for anyone to come and research using material we have onsite, unless there is a closure period specified. Please bear this in mind when considering whether to give them to us.

What happens if I want my documents back?

Once the documents have been catalogued, it is possible for the depositor to request them back temporarily. This is usually for an exhibition, or if someone within your group wants to do some dedicated research or digitisation. You can withdraw one item or several. Please note that only deposited items can be borrowed back, and we will only allow the depositing group, or someone with the permission of the depositing group, to withdraw them. Donated items are in the ownership of the Wiltshire & Swindon Archives and will not be loaned.

When you collect documents for a withdrawal, we will agree how long these will be kept for by you. Once that period has ended, an archivist will be in touch to remind you that they need to be returned, and if applicable, an extended period will be agreed. When returning documents, please arrange a suitable day so we can ensure an archivist is available to accept them.

We require one week's notice of intent to withdraw any item held on deposit. This is so that we can ensure ownership of the item, retrieve the item, do a condition survey of the item and prepare any paperwork.

If a depositor wishes to permanently withdraw their collection for any reason, it may be that the Wiltshire & Swindon Archives charges the depositor retrospectively for costs such as for packaging materials and boxes, and staff time in cataloguing the items. We would also strongly advise against this as we are an approved and accredited place of deposit, and you can trust that our high standard of storage and cataloguing will be hard to match elsewhere.

What about personal data in the archives?

Personal data (information relating to identifiable living individuals) is protected under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018. Generally, this legislation controls how your personal data can be processed (generally it can only be processed for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes), and gives you various rights over your own data.

Articles 5 and 9 of the UK GDPR provide some exemptions to these rules for "archiving purposes in the public interest". In practice, what this means is that the regulations do **not** mean that **all** records containing personal data should be destroyed, redacted or removed. Where appropriate, it is completely acceptable to retain records permanently as archives, to preserve our nation's memory and provide public accountability for decision-making.

Please **do not** destroy or remove personal data from records that you want to deposit. Our archivists are well-trained in data protection and will apply closure periods to any records containing personal data. This means that these records will not be available to the general public before a set period of time. This is usually 100 years after the date of birth of the person whose data is contained in the archive